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ABSTRACT

The paper describes methods and results which were obtained when systematically identifying important aspects of the future of organized camping, through the combination of "expert" opinion as well as "grassroots" input. The futures forecasting technique used was scenario writing, a well-thought story to describe a future state of affairs. Four perspectives on the future were written regarding conservative, humanistic, pessimistic, and optimistic views of the future of organized camping. A random sample of 270 camp directors were invited to respond to questions about the four scenarios. The respondents were asked to read the scenarios and answer several brief questions about their reaction to the stories. The 95 respondents included 42% who were affiliated with agency camps, 16% affiliated with church camps, and 33% with private independent camps. Sixty-five percent of the respondents represented resident camps with 12% involved in day camping, and 19% involved in both. The scenario which the directors said was most likely to occur was the conservative view to which 44% responded. The optimistic view received 39%, with humanistic and pessimistic receiving 7% and 4% respectively. The optimistic scenario was chosen to be the ideal for the next 10-15 years. The appendix contains the four scenarios. (ERB)

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USING SCENARIOS TO FORECAST THE FUTURE OF CAMPING

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Camping does not exist in a vacuum. Even though at times it would be nice to be isolated in the woods, it is not possible for camping to exist as a "movement", as an "industry", or as a "professional field" without being influenced by the rest of the world and without, hopefully, also having an impact on society. The changes which are rapidly occurring in society (Toffler refers to it as "future shock") are greatly affecting organized camping. The ways in which the camping movement responds to these changes will in turn, affect society.

This paper will describe methods and results which were obtained when systematically identifying important aspects of the future of organized camping. When some people visualized the future of camping, they viewed it with a great deal of optimism. Others looked at the future with a perplexed scratching of the head. It is not easy to mitigate all the potential challenges to camping which appear just around the corner. However, in this paper, an attempt has been made to identify through "grassroots" input the possible concerns camping leaders have regarding the future.

The premise of futures research and futures planning is the idea that a desirable future can be created by defining what that future ought to be. Forecasting is a natural and necessary part of everyone's ife. Futurists simply attempt to try to make an ordinary activity more rational and hence more successful. Cornish (1977) suggests that the study of the future may well be the most exciting intellectual enterprise of today.

The responsibility for literacy about the future does not lie only with institutions of higher education, professional associations, or in the hands of planners, but is the responsibility of everyone who is committed and concerned about the organized camping movement. We all must begin to ask questions about the future and make plans for it. This research suggested that "grassroots" people can have just as much input into the future as can "experts."

The futures forecasting technique used in this research was scenario writing. Scenarios are well-thought stories which describe a future state of affairs. These stories describe what will happen if "such and such" occurs. They are useful in viewing events taken together and in integrating various aspects of events.

Writing scenarios is not difficult. Imagination and familiarity with the situation are required. To construct a scenario, you begin with a checklist of aspects of society that require delineation. The story can be overdramatic and unlikely, but it must be based on facts. These stories allow us to free ourselves from strict bondage to the past. They allow us to see

a wide number of possibilities and help to explain interactions. Scenarios can help make us aware of potential problems which might occur--we can then abandom the proposed action or prepare to take precautions, to escape from disaster or seize opportunities. Scenarios can also give substance to alternative futures once they have been identified. The scenario is only effective when it is used with otner techniques. Sage and Chobot (1974) suggest that a scenario written alone is just science fiction. It is assumed that if a forecast in the form of an easy to read scenario is circulated widely enough, it's bound to generate some kind of reaction ranging from strong opposition to strong partisanship. The scenario itself is not a predictive device but it is most useful when it stimulates and disciplines the imagination.

Based on the results obtained in an earlier study which used "experts" and a Delphi futures forecasting technique, a number of facts were developed about the future of organized camping. Four perspectives on the future were written regarding conservative, humanistic, pessimistic, and optimistic views of the future of organized camping. (See Appendix A) Camp Directors' Reactions to the Scenarios

Copies of these scenarios were randomly sent to 270 camp directors whose names appeared in the ACA Parents' Guide to Accredited Camps. Ninety-five questionnaires were returned. The directors were asked to read the scenarios and answer several brief questions about their reactions to the stories. These directors included 42% who were affiliated with agency camps, 16%

affiliated with religious (church) camps, and 33% with private independent camps. Sixty-five percent of the respondents represented resident camps with 12% in day camping, and 19% involved in both. Directors had been in camping for an average of 13 years. The respondents included both ACA certified camp directors and those who were not.

The scenario which the directors said was most likely to occur was the CONSERVATIVE view to which 44% responded. The OPTIMISTIC view received 39% of the votes, with the HUMANISTIC and PESSIMISTIC receiving 7% and 4% respectively. When these scenarios were analyzed by sponsorship of camp, little difference was found among the responses.

Directors were asked which scenario would be the ideal one for the next 10-15 years. The great majority, 64%, said they found the OPTIMISTIC to be most ideal. Twenty-two percent voted for the HUMANISTIC view while 7% favored the CONSERVATIVE approach. Those in agency camps were more likely to express the HUMANISTIC view as being the ideal while private camps selected the CONSERVATIVE approach more than agency or church camps. However, the OPTIMISTIC view was the most common regardless of sponsorship of the camp.

The PESSIMISTIC view was the scenario which 77% of the camp directors agreed should not happen. Again, few differences existed regarding camp sponsorship, however 25% of the church camp directors indicated that the HUMANISTIC view was one that they hoped would not occur.

A number of goals for the future were presented by the

directors. Many of these paralleled what had already been said by the "experts". Several of the goals which were mentioned more than once included: keeping in touch with technological change, developing personal leisure ethics, improving management training, developing the whole person, promoting wellness concepts, increasing experiential programming, meeting needs of special populations, staying relevant, developing alternative energy sources, focusing on a variety of age groups, increasing environmental awareness, and encouraging camps to work together through organizations such as ACA to become better and stronger.

Several suggestions were made concerning other impacts which may affect camping which were not mentioned in the scenarios: inner-city problems, computer take-overs, loss of traditions, increased government restrictions, the nuclear arms race, "fad" camps, pressures on land use, lack of good staff, year round schooling, competition for the time of youth, and changing gender roles.

Conclusions

This research has shown a number of issues which will influence camping in the future. It is in no way perfect and complete, but it does provide some insights regarding what "experts" as well as "grassroots" camp directors think about the future. It was evident that a great deal of agreement exists and many people were able to identify a number of important issues. This is only the beginning as researchers, educators, camp directors, camp owners, staff, volunteers, and many other people seek to create a future which will continue to exemplify the

values of camping.

The best summary for this article is the ideas which camp directors gave in the final questionnaire about what can be done to create the kind of future which we desire. These exemplary ideas can be grouped into the broad areas of change orientation, camp promotion and public awareness, potential for personal growth within the camping experience, and the business operations of camp. Some of the needs for the future as expressed by camp directors included:

1. " Let the public know the value of camping."
2. " Deepen our commitment to basic camping values through education and training."
3. " Be concerned with the humanistic side of camp but manage camp efficiently."
4. " Do meaningful research to back the program results."
5. " Conduct more year-round camping."
6. " Put less stress on money making and more on people making."
7. " Hard work, good managment, open minds, good marketing."
8. " Provide more educaticnal opportunities for professionals."
9. " Help kids have a balance of work and play."
10. "Program camp for the needs of the camper."
11. "Be progressive and aggressive in thinking; be willing to change."
12. "Broaden the base of camping through increased ACA membership."
13. "Continue our optimistic, creative efforts."

14. "Work with the government agencies which insist on more regulations."

15. "Educate and promote camping to all: parents, campers, and others."

16. "Work together through ACA and other organizations."

17. "Plan ahead."

18. "Focus on what and who we are in business for and how best to serve the people."

19. "Put less stress on money making and more on people making."

20. "More metworking among camping administrators."

21. "Develop leadership and managment from the grassroots up."

22. "Provide more educational opportunities for professionals."

23. "Move from a survival view to a dream vision kind of view."

24. "Help the staff magnify our work through their lives."

25. "Use down to earth common sense."

This paper has hopefully provided some new ideas about the future. The magic formula for the future of organized camping exists inside each one of us and will be determined by the day-to-day planning we undertake now. Society is changing rapidly and these changes are definitely influencing the organized camping movement. We can create a future for camping if we have a vision of what camping can be within the context of the changing society. Many challenges will confront us in the future. If we are responsive to the challenges, the past history and present value of camping will sustain and strengthen the camping movement into the twenty first century. It was evident that a great deal of agreement exists and many people were able to identify a

number of important issues, regardless whether they were considered "experts" or "grassroots". This is only the beginning as researchers, educators, camp directors, camp owners, staff, volunteers, and many other people seek to create a future which will continue to exemplify the essential values of camping. We must continue to envision what that future might be.

Appendix A

SCENARIOS ON THE FUTURE OF ORGANIZED CAMPING

CONSERVATIVE VIEW

In the 1990's, the organized camping movement is very similar to what it was in the early 1980's although the period of the 80's was somewhat difficult for the organized camping movement. The economy created the greatest problems. Rising unemployment, job shortages, and economic fluctuations affected camps directly as well as the participants in camp programs. However, through careful management and marketing techniques, most camps were able to survive. Those camps which did not make it through the 80's did not "stay their courses" as well as the others.

In the 1990's, children are still the primary participants in camping programs. Due to less subsidization of camps, the campers tend to be wealthier and the emphasis is on specialty camps which can best be marketed to attract participants.

Camp programs remain very much the same as they were in the 1970's. Camp administrators, however, are hired for their management expertise, while camp program directors deal almost exclusively with the needs of staff and campers. Camps continue to promote the values of hard work, democracy, and achievement in their programs. Leaders in the camp movement feel very fortunate that they were able to survive the turbulent 80's and seek ways to remain innovative enough to attract participants, but do not wish to interact with or influence society to any great extent.

HUMANISTIC VIEW

The 1990's represent for organized camping a time when humanism and concern for the growth and value of people are paramount. Despite the economic problems of the past ten years, camp administrators have been able to keep the accountability of camping focused on the camper and the value of camping for both community and personal growth.

The organized camping movement has paralleled the humanistic movement which has resulted in little emphasis being placed upon those differences which once existed in society. For example, the mainstreaming of persons with disabilities and the age integration of families and unrelated persons in camp has resulted in an improved appreciation of the individual within the society, rather than an emphasis on differences by segregating people into groups. Work and leisure are becoming equally valued, so a prime focus of camping has been on helping people (both children and adults) learn the value of meaningful activity and leisure.

Humanistic management has not always been easy for camp administrators. They were faced with some very difficult problems due to increased costs from high inflation during the mid 1980's and were challenged with an essential need for financial solvency. However, the accountability of camps has focused on the social benefits upon society due to camping. Research during the late 1980's was able to show empirically that camping led to personal growth which ultimately benefits society. Management techniques were also applied to camping through new technology which enabled camp directors to make better management decisions in much less time. This newly freed time could then be devoted to staff training and development.

The emphasis in the humanistic view of camping in the 1990's is on the lifelong aspects of participation in organized camping for adults and for families (families are defined very broadly to include single parents, unrelated committed persons who live together, as well s married people with children who used to be considered "traditional" families in the 1970's). The emphasis on wellness has also been taught and emphasized exclusively in camps throughout the United States and has even been a model for camps in other countries. The focus on the needs of a variety of campers has been the key to the survival of camps in the 1980's.

PESSIMISTIC VIEW

The organized camping movement of the 1990's reflects complexity, scarcity, turmoil, and exclusivity. Competing needs and diminishing resources have resulted in a lack of cooperation within the camping movement and within the society in general. Technology has escalated so quickly that its associated values have created great upheaval in the society.

The status of organized camping has deteriorated simply because the movement has been merely reacting to the rapid changes in society. Camp professionals have not been able to fully establish and articulate the value of camping to constituents or even to professional peers involved with camping.

Although sound business managment practices have been encouraged for camping, these management techniques have not been applied rapidly or with commitment. The economic problems of the country in the 1980's resulted in rising costs which eventually forced many camps, except for those serving the most wealthy campers, to fold. Camps which cater to the wealthy have been the primary survivors. The total emphasis on profit-making has erased many of the values upon which the organized camping movement was once founded.

The clientele of organized camps in the 1990's has become a very narrow group. Prior to the 1980's, camps were primarily for children, but did try to meet the needs of poorer children as well as children from more affluent families. During the 80's, the population continued to shift toward more older adults with fewer children. As a result, other organizations and resorts were formed to meet the organized camping needs of adults. By the time camping professionals began to change their clientele focus, it was too late to captivate a wide segment of those people interested in camping. Thus, camping professionals had to maintain their existence by focusing on the wealthier children, dropping specialized groups (such as the low-income, disabled, or high risk campers), and attempting to offer special experiences for adults not being offered by the adult-centered commercial enterprises.

OPTIMISTIC VIEW

New work-leisure attitudes, lifestyle changes, and ethics have shaped organized camping into a movement with great importance in the 1990's. Camping has established itself as an essential societal institution which is the right of all children as well as an important opportunity for all adults.

Despite the very difficult economic times of the 1980's, camp administrators were able to incorporate appropriate management techniques, innovative programs, and a philosophy centered on a concern for the "whole" person which resulted in the growth of the camping movement. It was found that in a society experiencing rapid technological change, changing values, and general confusion, camps could offer children and adults an opportunity to experience community, acquire a leisure ethic, and develop coping skills. Camps in the 1990's are a model for many other institutions in society which seek to establish these kinds of values within people. The changes are still occurring, but it is evident that the camping movement, through its futures planning and vision, has established itself in the 1990's as a dominant force.

Many camps in the 1990's are model examples of on-going projects concerned with alternative energy sources, experiential programming for a wide audience, and one of the leading providers and promoters of natural environment protection and appreciation. While population problems which resulted in resource depletion, pollution, and land management problems have begun to be addressed, camps have been instrumental in preserving natural areas and educating people in the importance of sound land management.

The efficient managment of camps has enabled camp administrators to focus their energies in other directions for the good of the campers which are involved. Technology, marketing techniques, public relations, and sound business practices occurred because of the educational efforts extended by the American Camping Association which has gained a very strong base of support.

All is not perfect in the field of organized camping in the 1990's, but leaders within the camp movement have utilized resources for effective planning and research which has resulted in a position of strength for the movement. Camp administrators know who they are, what they can do best, and have a vision regarding the future they are creating.